

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 PM-03 SP-02 SAB-01 PRS-01

L-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 /034 W

-----110223Z 001639 /63

O 110115Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 687

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 1009

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: BOYD'S RESIGNATION

REF: PANAMA 829

SUMMARY: BOYD'S DEPARTURE COMES AT THE END OF A NUMBER OF SIGNS OF HIS DIMINISHING INFLUENCE WITH TORRIJOS. THERE ARE SOME GROUNDS TO BELIEVE THAT HE HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY, IF NOT FORMALLY, FIRED SINCE HE WAS IN WASHINGTON. DIFFERENCES OF BOTH FORM AND SUBSTANCE BETWEEN HIM AND TORRIJOS ALMOST CERTAINLY PLAYED A PART IN HIS DEPARTURE--BUT IT WAS ALSO A RENEWED SIGN THAT THE GENERAL IS THE ONE WHO RUNS THINGS HERE AND THAT OTHERS HAD BETTER NOT FORGET IT. WE SEE IN BOYD'S DEPARTURE A SIGNAL THAT TORRIJOS IS DETERMINED TO MAKE A GREATER SHARE OF DECISIONS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS HIMSELF. FURTHER, OUR BEST ASSESSMENT IS THAT TORRIJOS IS HESITATING BEFORE MAKING THESE DECISIONS AND THAT GREAT CARE WILL BE REQUIRED TO BRING HIM ALONG. END SUMMARY

1. THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY OBVIOUS SIGNALS OVER
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SEVERAL WEEKS THAT ALL WAS NOT MOONLIGHT AND ROSES BETWEEN GENERAL TORRIJOS AND BOYD, HIS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR. LATENT DIVERGENCES BETWEEN THEM EXISTED FOR SOME TIME. NEGOTIATOR CARLOS LOPEZ-GUEVARA HAS COMMENTED (REFTEL) ABOUT THE PROBLEM "PROFSSIONALS LIKE AQUILINO AND ME" SOMETIMES HAVE IN DEALING WITH, AND UNDERSTANDING, A MAN LIKE TORRIJOS. RECENTLY, THE OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE

BOYD PUBLICLY EXUDED AFTER HIS MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE HAVE BEEN COUNTERED BY REPEATED COUNSELS OF CAUTION FROM TORRIJOS HIMSELF AND FROM THOSE CLOSE TO HIM (PARTICULARLY TV COMMENTATOR MARIO VELASQUEZ AND THE GOP-GUIDED NEWSPAPER "CRITICA").

2. IN RETROSPECT, THE TORRIJOS FELIPILLO SPEECH (PANAMA 544) WAS SOMETHING OF A WATERSHED. THE GENERAL CONTRADICTED HIS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR (PANAMA 575). PUBLIC REPETITION OF THE CONTRADICTION THEREAFTER BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO ACCOUNT FOR EXCEPT AS A SIGNAL OF IMPENDING DIFFICULTY FOR BOYD.

3. THE WASHINGTON TRIP BOTH TEMPORARILY MASKED, AND AGGRAVATED, THIS LATEST PROBLEM. BOYD PRESSED BEFORE DEPARTING FOR ACTUAL NEGOTIATING DECISIONS, WITH THE PROBABLE INTENT OF TRYING TO PACKAGE A DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE SECRETARY. TORRIJOS WAS NOT PREPARED TO MAKE THOSE DECISIONS. A NUMBER OF PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS HOLD THE OPINION THAT TORRIJOS REALLY WANTS TO DO THIS FINAL DEAL HIMSELF--PERHAPS EVEN AT THE SUMMIT. DURING THE TRIP, BOYD PRESENTED HIMSELF IN THE MEDIA AS "THE MAN WHO."

4. TORRIJOS' TELEVISION STATEMENT TUESDAY EVENING (FBIS/PANAMA PA 090116Y), REPRINTED IN "MATUTINO" THE NEXT DAY, WAS AN INTENTIONAL PUBLIC SLAP AT BOYD. HE ABOVE ALL OTHERS HAD BEEN THE "FRONT-LINE MAN" WHOSE EXISTENCE TORRIJOS' "NEW METHODOLOGY" DENIES. SUCH A CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT DEVASTED BOYD'S CREDIBILITY IN PANAMA.

5. SEVERAL QUESTIONS ARISE FROM THIS TURN OF EVENTS. MOST IMMEDIATELY, DID HE JUMP OR WAS HE PUSHED? THE RECORD SHOWS HE RESIGNED DUE TO DIFFERENCES IN POLICY. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, TORRIJOS CONSIDERED RECALLING BOYD FROM WASHINGTON (PANAMA 742). BOYD TOLD THE AMBASSADOR ON THE AFTERNOON HIS RESIGNATION WAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD NOT ACTUALLY SEEN TORRIJOS SINCE HIS RETURN. THUS, THERE ARE SOME GROUNDS TO CONCLUDE THAT HE HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY, IF NOT FORMALLY, FIRED SINCE WASHINGTON.

6. SECOND, WHY DID HE HAVE TO GO? IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, TORRIJOS HAS A VERY WELL-DEVELOPED EGO. HE IS NOT ABOUT TO HAVE ANYONE CHALLENGE HIS PERSONAL CONTROL, PARTICULARLY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. TO US, BOYD HAS APPEARED TO BE DOING JUST THAT FOR WEEKS. HIS DEPARTURE MUST THEREFORE BE TAKEN AS A RENEWED SIGN THAT THE

GENERAL IS THE ONE WHO RUNS THINGS HERE--AND THAT EVERYONE ELSE HAD BETTER NOT FORGET IT.

7. IN ADDITION, BOYD CLEARLY WISHED TO CONDUCT HIMSELF AS A TRAINED NEGOTIATOR, OPERATING UNDER POLICY GUIDANCE FROM HIS CHIEF--NOT AS CHARLIE MCCARTHY TO TORRIJOS' EDGAR BERGEN. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT TORRIJOS TAKES EXCEPTION TO THIS APPROACH. TORRIJOS' VARIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATION ISSUES--PARTICULARLY NEUTRALITY--HAVE ALSO BEEN AT VARIANCE WITH BOYD'S. WE WOULD NOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE APPARENT DIFFERENCES WITHOUT FURTHER INDICATIONS THAT THEY WILL BE COMMANDING IN PANAMA'S FUTURE POLICY. BUT THEY DO APPEAR TO EXIST. AND BOYD'S DEPARTURE MAY LEAVE TORRIJOS EVEN MORE FIRMLY POSSESSED OF HIS OWN VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT.

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 PM-03 SP-02 SAB-01 PRS-01
L-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 /034 W
-----110225Z 001774 /63

O 110115Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 688

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 1009

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8. DOES THIS OCCURRENCE MEAN THAT ANYTHING BASIC IS HAPPENING IN PANAMANIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS? WE DOUBT IT. BOYD'S DEPARTURE WILL BE GREETED WITH MIXED FEELINGS AMONG MODERATE GROUPS. HIS SUCCESSOR IS NOT TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY, IN DOMESTIC TERMS, EXCEPT INsofar AS HE IS MOUTHPIECE FOR TORRIJOS. THESE EVENTS WILL ENHANCE THE DOUBTS OF MANY MODERATES ABOUT THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN THIS REGIME. BUT BOYD'S DEPARTURE APPEARS TO US AS FUNDAMENTALLY ARISING FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES AND AFFECTING DOMESTIC POLITICS ONLY IN A MINOR WAY.

9. WHAT--IF ANYTHING--DOES BOYD'S DEPARTURE MEAN FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS? FIRST, THE PANAMANIA TEAM NOW CONSISTS WHOLLY OF TWO TYPES--THOSE OWING THEIR POSITIONS TO THEIR PERSONAL STANDING WITH TORRIJOS (E.G., GONZALEZ-REVILLA, ESCOBAR, AHUMADA, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT ARIAS) AND THE "TECHNOCRATS" (E.G., LOPEZ-GUEVARA, DE LA ROSA, FABREGA AND HIS GROUP). BOYD HAD A CERTAIN INDEPENDENT STANDING IN PANAMA THAT ANTEDATED TORRIJOS. HIS SUCCESSOR DOES NOT. BOTH OF THESE TYPES CAN AND DO INFLUENCE THE GENERAL BY THEIR ADVICE AND THEIR MANNER OF PRESENTA-
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TION OF MATTERS TO HIM. BUT NEITHER TYPE WILL HAVE THE SORT OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY THAT BOYD EVIDENTLY FELT WAS DUE TO A NEGOTIATOR--AND NEITHER TYPE APPEARS TO US SOLIDLY-BASED ENOUGH TO TRY TO ACQUIRE IT.

10. EMPHASIS ON THE COLLEGIALITY OF THE PANAMANIAN TEAM--TORRIJOS' "NEW METHODOLOGY" PRECLUDES "PERMANENT FRONT-LINE MEN"--BEARS THIS OUT. IN ANNOUNCING GONZALEZ-REVILLA'S APPOINTMENT, NO MENTION HAS YET BEEN MADE OF THE "...AND CHIEF NEGOTIATOR", PRT OF BOYD'S FORMER TITLE. TORRIJOS CONFIDANT RODRIGO (RORY) GONZALEZ INDICATED TO AMBASSADOR TODAY (PANAMA 1001) THAT HE EXPECTED GONZALEZ-REVILLA TO PLAY A LESS DIRECT ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS THAN IN THE PAST, LEAVING ESCOBAR AS THE DE FACTO PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN. THIS MAY GIVE RISE TO A SITUATION OF DIVIDED AUTHORITY WHICH COULD BECOME DIFFICULT. AND SINCE THINGS ARE STILL SORTING THEMSELVES OUT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT WE WILL BE CERTAIN WHO WILL SIT AS PANAMA'S CHIEF SPOKESMAN UNTIL THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS. SOME TECHNOCRATS INTERPRETED TORRIJOS' TELEVISION STATEMENT AS IMPLYING THAT TORRIJOS HIMSELF WOULD IN EFFECT, BE PANAMA'S ONLY "CHIEF NEGOTIATOR", AND THAT TALKING TO HIS TEAM WOULD BE TALKING THROUGH IT TO HIM, AND NOTHING MORE. BOYD'S DEPARTURE APPEARS TO BE A SIGNAL THAT TORRIJOS IS DETERMINED TO RESERVE TO HIMSELF A GREATER SHARE OF DECISION-MAKING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. GIVEN HIS USUAL HABITS OF SNAP DECISIONS WITH INSUFFICIENT CONSIDERATION OF LONGER-RANGE CONSEQUENCES, AND RELUCTANCE TO MAKE DECISIONS AT ALL UNTIL EVENTS FORCE HIM TO IT, WE SEE THIS AS MAKING THE CONDUCT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS A MORE DELICATE PROPOSITION THAN WAS HERETOFORE THE CASE.

11. FINALLY, BOYD IN WASHINGTON AND SINCE WAS CLEARLY READY TO MOVE RAPIDLY THROUGH THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS FOR A FINAL SETTLEMENT. SHOULD WE READ HIS DEPARTURE AS CONFIRMATION THAT TORRIJOS IS HESITATING AT DOING THE SAME?
A NUMBER OF MODERATES IN PANAMA HAVE BEEN SO READING TORRIJOS FOR SOME TIME (REFTEL). HE HAS MADE MORE
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STATEMENTS RECENTLY THAN IN THE PAST WHICH APPEAR TO
INDICATE A HARDENING OF SUBSTANCE ON VARIOUS NEGOTIATING
ISSUES--OR AT LEAST, AN INCOMPREHENSION ON HIS PART
OF THE SORT OF COMPROMISES THAT WILL BE NECESSARY TO
WRAP THIS MATTER UP. HE STILL WANTS A TREATY, AND CAN BE
BROUGHT ALONG. BUT HIS VOLATILE NATURE, AND WHAT WE SEE
AS HIS CURRENT DISPOSITION, COULD CAUSE HIM TO BLOW
UP IN ALL OUR FACES UNLESS THIS IS DONE WITH GREAT
CARE ON THE PART OF BOTH HIS OWN ADVISERS AND THE US
NEGOTIATORS.
JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PANAMA01009
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770048-1035
Format: TEL
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770250/aaaabrtn.tel
Line Count: 239
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 05ebf5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 PANAMA 829
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3342454
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOYD'S RESIGNATION
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PN, (BOYD GUARDIA, AQUILINO EDGARDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/05ebf5c7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009